

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12
/093 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:DHESTER:TH
APPROVED BY NEA:NAVELIOTES
EUR/WE:JDOBBINS (INFO)
IO/UNP:SESCUDERO (INFO)
-----011246 241943Z /47

O 241931Z DEC 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAKAR IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 307324

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, AG, FR, MO, MR

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR MAKES DEMARCHE ON FRENCH
INTERVENTION IN SAHARA

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY VELIOTES MET
WITH ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR MAOUI AT LATTER'S REQUEST ON
URGENT BASIS AT 2:15 P.M. ON DECEMBER 23 TO RECEIVE GOA
DEMARCHE ON FRENCH INTERVENTION IN WESTERN SAHARA. AT
INITIATION OF MEETING, MAOUI SAID HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED
BY GOA TO MAKE DEMARCHE TO USG AT HIGHEST LEVEL POSSIBLE,
NOTING GOA WAS MAKING SIMILAR DEMARCHES TO OTHER GOVERN-
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MENTS.

2. AFTER REFERRING TO HIS PREVIOUS VISIT ON DECEMBER 15 TO
INFORM ACTING SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER OF POLISARIO INTENTION
TO RELEASE FRENCH PRISONERS, MAOUI SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WAS
EXTREMELY CONCERNED BY RECENT FRENCH INTERVENTION IN THE
SAHARA. ON BEHALF OF HIS GOVERNMENT, MAOUI ASKED USG TO

TRY TO INJECT "CALM AND DETENTE" INTO SITUATION. MAOUI SAID GOA DID NOT REPEAT NOT UNDERSTAND BASIC REASONING BEHIND FRENCH INTERVENTION. IT WAS ONE THING FOR FRANCE TO PROVIDE ARMS TO MAURITANIA, BUT TO SEND TROOPS AND THEN ACTIVELY INTERVENE BY AIR WAS SOMETHING ELSE. MAOUI MENTIONED SPEECH NOVEMBER 17 BY FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER

BOURGES IN WHICH HE SAID FRANCE WOULD INTERVENE ABROAD TO PROTECT ITS CITIZENS. ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR CONTENTED FRANCE KNOWS ITS CITIZENS ARE IN DANGER IN MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO BECAUSE THESE COUNTRIES ARE OCCUPYING SAHAROU TERRITORY AND POLISARIO CONSIDERS MAURITANIAN AND MOROCCAN TERRITORY AS LEGITIMATE WAR ZONES. HE ACCUSED FRENCH GOVERNMENT OF USING HOSTILE CLIMATE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN FRANCE AS PRETEXT FOR INTERVENTION. HE ALSO NOTED THAT WHILE POLISARIO HAD FREED FRENCH PRISONERS, FRENCH NEGOTIATOR CHAYET HAS NOT UPHELD FRENCH SIDE OF DEAL, WHICH WAS TO PROVIDE LIST OF POLISARIO PRISONERS HELD BY MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO.

3. ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE NOT REPEAT NOT TO WORSEN SITUATION. HE ALSO CLAIMED GOA HAS BEEN RECEPTIVE TO ALL PAST MEDIATION EFFORTS, BUT FELT IN VIEW OF THEIR FAILURE THE REVIVAL OF OAU SPONSORED SPECIAL SESSION ON SAHARAN CONFLICT IS NECESSARY. MAOUI NOTED THAT OAU PRESIDENT

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BONGO HAD COMMENTED THAT IF ANOTHER LOCATION COULD NOT BE FOUND, LIBREVILLE COULD HOST MEETING.

4. IN REPLY VELIOTES SAID USG REMAINS VERY SENSITIVE TO SITUATION WHICH WE HAD TRIED TO CALM LAST MONTH BY SEEKING ALGERIAN HELP IN FACILITATING RELEASE OF FRENCH PRISONERS AND URGING RESTRAINT ON THE PARTIES. HE ASKED IF GOA HAS CONFIRMATION OF FRENCH INTERVENTION, TO WHICH MAOUI RESPONDED THAT ALGIERS HAD BEEN VERY POSITIVE ON SUBJECT. VELIOTES DID NOT CONCEDE REPORTED FRENCH INTERVENTION AS ESTABLISHED FACT BUT NOTED THAT IF IT TOOK PLACE, IT SHOULD NOT BE A SURPRISE SINCE PARIS HAD REPEATEDLY STATED PUBLICLY FRANCE WOULD DEFEND ITS CITIZENS IN MAURITANIA IN CONJUNCTION WITH WHATEVER DEFENSE AGREEMENTS EXIST WITH THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT. HE ENGAGED MAOUI IN DISCUSSION OF REPORTED INCIDENT, NOTING THAT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES OF POLISARIO ATTACK INVOLVING FRENCH CIVILIAN PRESENCE, SUCH FRENCH REACTION AGAINST THE WITHDRAWING COLUMN NOT UNEXPECTED. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES AND ALGERIAN CONCERNS, HE SUGGESTED TO MAOUI THAT GOA MIGHT ADVISE POLISARIO TO AVOID SUCH AREAS.

5. MAOUI ASSERTED THAT GOA INFLUENCE WITH POLISARIO DOES NOT GO FAR, SUGGESTING THAT GOA HAD NO CONTROL OVER TARGETS WHICH MIGHT BE HIT. VELIOTES CONCLUDED THAT WE HOPED LIBERATION OF FRENCH PRISONERS BY POLISARIO WOULD CALM SITUATION AND THAT FURTHER CIVILIAN HOSTAGES WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE TAKEN.

6. COMMENT: CONVERSATION WAS CORDIAL AND LOW KEY, WHICH

FITS MAOUI'S GENERAL STYLE. WE DID NOT GET THE IMPRESSION THAT MAOUI EXPECTED ANY ADDITIONAL RESPONSE TO THIS PARTICULAR DEMARCHE.

7. WE ARE IN PROCESS OF STAFFING RESPONSE TO BOUTEFLIKA
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LETTER WHICH WE HOPE TO HAVE FOR EMBASSY ALGIERS NEXT WEEK.

8. WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED PRESS REPORT OF DEC. 23
CONFIRMATION BY GOE THAT FRENCH AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.
VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, AMBASSADORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE307324
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DHESTER:TH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770481-0450
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771218/aaaaaokb.tel
Line Count: 143
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fb690efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 130856
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR MAKES DEMARCHE ON FRENCH INTERVENTION IN SAHARA
TAGS: PBOR, AG, FR, MO, MR
To: ALGIERS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fb690efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009